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Ille regit dictis animos

Virgil's Perspective on Cicero's Final Years

Introduction

According to Donatus' *Vita*, Virgil was born on the Ides of October during the first year in which Pompey and Crassus shared the Consulship, that is to say, 70 BCE.¹ Although the more fantastical elements of that biography leave us uncertain as to precisely what the poet was up to in the cataclysmic year of 44 BCE, it is certain that these events could not have easily slipped past the 25-year-old Roman citizen.

There is no doubt that Julius Caesar's assassination and subsequent catasterism left a mark on the *Eclogues*, and there has been no shortage of scholarship on what that has to tell us about Virgil's hopes and concerns for Rome's future as the extended cold war between Octavian and Antony threatened to grow hot.² The Ides of March, however, is not the only important date in 44 BCE, and in this chapter I will explore how the eruption of conflict between Mark Antony and Cicero in November and December of that year, culminating in Cicero's proscription and death a year later, impacted upon Virgil. Specifically, I will look at how he translated these events into his *Aeneid* some two and a half decades later.

To do this, I shall undertake a close-reading of two well-studied moments of Ciceronian reception in Virgil's epic narrative, both of which draw upon the reputation the orator garnered in the final year of his life. I will first analyse the surprisingly numerous appearances of Cicero's ghostly shadow in the Underworld of Book 6, demonstrating how crucial he was for Virgil's ability to conjure up memories of the Civil War. After this, I will turn to the Ciceronian underpinnings of Latium's foremost orator Drances in Book 11, arguing that the dynamics of his contest with Turnus draw heavily upon Cicero's struggle against Mark Antony.

A close study of Virgil's meditation upon Cicero's final year and the role he played in lighting the touch paper on Rome's most recent Civil War is of critical

¹ Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 2. For help on aspects of this chapter, I am grateful to Llewelyn Morgan, Talitha Kearey, Ingo Gildenhard, Stephen Heyworth, Stephen Harrison, Richard Rutherford, Maria Czepiel, Tom Keeline, Caroline Bishop, Anton Powell, and, of course, the editors of this volume.

² For recent work on this topic, see Gurval 1997; Meban 2009; Pandey 2013.

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importance for understanding the historical resonances that permeate the internecine conflict dominating the second half of the *Aeneid*. However, it is also crucial for a full appreciation of how Cicero's final conflict, defeat and death was understood and memorialized in Antiquity. In the next chapter of this volume, Giuseppe La Bua argues that the early stages of Cicero's canonization as an historical character placed a heavy emphasis on his role in bringing about the wars that swept away the Republic and brought Augustus' Principate into being. This chapter builds on those findings, demonstrating that when Virgil wanted his readers to confront the violent dysfunction of their recent past, he reached for Cicero to make his point. Beyond this volume, the findings of this chapter will also bolster the longstanding and diligent hunt for traces of Cicero in the Virgilian corpus.

Reception of the Ciceronian corpus

The hunt for the traces of Marcus Tullius Cicero in the Virgilian corpus is both as longstanding and as intrepid as befits a figure of Cicero's stature.³ Yet, however influential a figure he may been in the young Virgil's education, he is not accorded the honour meted out to his younger contemporary Cato and his famed nemesis Catiline, that of a named cameo in the *Aeneid*.⁴ Rather, like Pompey the Great, his presence must be excavated from this densely allusive text.⁵ His best-known presence in the *Aeneid* comes in Book 6, where his *Somnium Scipionis* can be seen peeking out behind the phantom Anchises as the latter delivers a cosmology of Roman imperialism to his son.⁶ This disquieting lecture is not, however, Cicero's only appearance in Virgil's underworld. In the course of his katabasis, Aeneas has already come face-to-face with Cicero, in a form that calls to mind his final fight against Antony.

Not long after the Sibyl has led Aeneas past Cerberus and the segregated allfemale zone of the *campi lugentes*, he is presented with a selection of familiar figures from his past. After first putting to flight an approaching phalanx of

 $[{]f 3}$ The development of a theory positing a marked Ciceronian presence in Virgil goes back to La Cerda in the ${f 17}^{th}$ century. For a detailed bibliography of this debate, see Grilli/Crawford 1984.

⁴ For the centrality of Cicero to the education of young Romans of Virgil's age, see Keeline 2018 and La Bua 2019. For Cato and Catiline's named cameos in the *Aeneid*, see Verg. *Aen.* 8.666 – 670. **5** For Pompey's appearance in Virgil's description of the death of Priam, see Serv. *Aen.* 2.554 –

⁵ For Pompey's appearance in Virgil's description of the death of Priam, see Serv. *Aen.* 2.554–558.

⁶ Norden 1916, 309 – 316; Fletcher 1941 *ad* 733 f.; Lamacchia 1964; Feeney 1986; West 1987; Horsfall 2013, xxiii.

ghostly Greeks, the souls of his deceased Trojan comrades approach Aeneas, chief among whom is Priam's son (Aeneas' own brother-in-law) Deiphobus:

Atque hic Priamiden laniatum corpore toto Deiphobum uidet et lacerum crudeliter ora, ora manusque ambas, populataque tempora raptis auribus et truncas inhonesto uulnere naris.7

And here he sees Deiphobus too, Priam's son mutilated, his whole body, his face hacked to pieces-Ah, so cruel-his face and both his hands, and his ears ripped from his ravaged head, his nostrils slashed, disgraceful wound.

The overwhelming impression one gets from this description is one of horror. Virgil dwells on the injuries sustained by Deiphobus. However, although he draws attention to the wounds borne by his whole body, the extended ecphrasis with which we are furnished is one limited almost entirely to the mutilation of Deiphobus' head.

Two aspects of this scene are crucial to its interpretation. The first is the unusual adjective applied to Deiphobus' temples: populata. As Austin notes, the use of this word to describe an injury done to the body is an innovation of Virgil's own. This word, with its connotations of looting, should properly be applied to places being ransacked. One does not, however, have to stretch very far to make sense of this. What else, after all, does Deiphobus' body represent in this context than the sack of Troy? This section of Aeneas' journey is a return to his past, a return to the fateful day that saw the destruction of his patria. Virgil's use of the unusual phrase populata tempora forces his reader to see Deiphobus' lacerated corpse through the lens of Aeneas's memories of the looting of his home.9

The second effect is the pointed repetition of ora. As well as adding to the emotional intensity of what is being described, this repetition forces the second appearance of the word to function separately from the rest of the sentence.¹⁰ Treated as such, the almost parenthetical phrase ora manusque ambas is lent a force beyond its immediate context. In light of the popular tradition that surrounded his death, it is difficult indeed not to detect an echo here of the particular punishment meted out to Cicero's corpse after his proscription and execu-

⁷ Verg. Aen. 6.494-497. All Aeneid translations: Fagles 2006.

⁸ Austin 1977 ad loc.

⁹ Which was itself adjacent to Deiphobus': Verg. Aen. 2.310.

¹⁰ Cf. Verg. Aen. 2.405 – 406.

tion in 43 BCE-having his hands and head amputated and nailed to the Speakers' Platform in the centre of Rome. 11 The cultural significance taken on by Antony's decision to treat Cicero's body in such a fashion was best captured by the students of the early imperial declamation halls. Take, for example, this *Philip*pic-inflected color by Quintus Haterius:

Proposito in rostris capite Ciceronis, quamuis omnia metu tenerentur, gemitus tamen populi liber fuit.12

When Cicero's head was displayed on the rostra, though fear gripped all, yet the groans of the people were free.¹³

In light of the cultural prominence given to Cicero's death in this period, it is difficult indeed to imagine that the unusual prominence Virgil gives to Deiphobus' head and hands is not meant to put the reader in mind of the proscriptions' most notoriously gruesome trophy.

Linking together the dual significance of Deiphobus-a simultaneous reminder of the fall of Troy and of the death of Cicero—we can begin to appreciate just how significant Cicero's final years were to Virgil. The vicious sack of Troy that occupies the second book of the Aeneid has been profitably read as an allegory for Rome's descent into Civil War. 14 The reappearance in the underworld of a character killed in that slaughter allows Virgil to revisit that analogy in a book which offers a deep meditation on the interaction between Rome's history and its present. 15 In the form of Deiphobus' disfigured body, Cicero's resonance as a symbol of that conflict is given its due prominence.

Nor is this the only time that Cicero's butchered remains appear in connection with the allegorized Civil War in this poem. Book 8 of the Aeneid, describing Aeneas' sojourn to Evander's kingdom on the site of what will be Rome, contains the fable of the battle between Hercules and Cacus. The links between this tale and the contemporary history of Virgil's Rome are well-documented.16 The shared imagery of belched fire both here and on the depiction of Augustus at Ac-

¹¹ This aspect of Cicero's death is described by Cornelius Severus, FRP 219; Livy, Sen. Suas. 6.17; Cremutius Cordus, FRHist 71, F1; Bruttedius Niger, FRHist 72, F1; and Plut. Cic. 48.6. Appian attests to a separate tradition in which only Cicero's right hand was cut off: B Ciu. 4.77.

¹² Sen. Controu. 7.2.5; Cic. Phil. 2.64.

¹³ Translation Winterbottom 1974.

¹⁴ Abbot 2000; Morgan 2000. For Juno's demand that the new Roman people be built on the ashes of Troy, and the resonance of that after the Civil War, see Feeney 1984.

¹⁶ On the Hercules and Cacus episode, see Galinsky 1972, 131-149; Gransden 1976, 1-20; Hardie 1986, 110 – 119; Morgan 1998.

tium on Aeneas' shield joins the two struggles together and forces the reader to consider each in light of the other.

With this in mind, it should come as no surprise to find the following in Evander's description of the monstrous Cacus' lair:

Hic spelunca fuit uasto summota recessu, semihominis Caci facies quam dira tenebat solis inaccessam radiis; semperque recenti caede tepebat humus, foribusque adfixa superbis ora uirum tristi pendebant pallida tabo.¹⁷

There once was a cavern here, a vast unplumbed recess untouched by the sun's rays, where a hideous, part-human monster made his home-Cacus. The ground was always steaming with fresh blood and nailed to his high and mighty doors, men's faces dangled, sickening, rotting, and bled white.

This picture is not as specifically Ciceronian as that found in book 6, lacking as it does reference to the victims' hands. 18 Even with this caveat, however, we can still see Virgil once again preparing the ground for a Civil War allegory by presenting his reader with the gruesome spectacle of the proscriptions, and specifically an aspect of them which was most prominently associated with Cicero. 19

The aftermath of Cicero's final struggle, then, can be seen to have been intimately bound up with Virgil's poetic visualization of the horrors of Rome's most recent Civil War. These gruesome glimpses of his remains, however, are only one of the ways in which Cicero's final fight was memorialized in the epic landscape of the Aeneid, and the sympathy the reader may feel at these confrontations does not translate easily to the others.

Friends Reunited

Once Aeneas has glutted himself on the sight of his old friends and enemies, the Sibyl leads him further into the world of the departed where each group of spirits

¹⁷ Verg. Aen. 8.193 – 197.

¹⁸ For this passage as specifically reminiscent of Cicero, see Bacon 1986, 313 n. 17; Narducci 2009, 9.

¹⁹ Alongside his personal experience of being proscribed, Cicero was also responsible for one of the most famous descriptions of the same disposal of an enemy's remains in the Civil War between Marius and Sulla: Cic. De or. 3.10.

is separated into different areas depending on the manner of their demise or the conduct of their lives. As he passes the gates of Tartarus, where souls are being punished for their sins in life, the Sibyl describes the following pair of miscreants:

Vendidit hic auro patriam dominumque potentem imposuit, fixit leges pretio atque refixit; hic thalamum inuasit natae uetitosque hymenaeos: ausi omnes immane nefas ausoque potiti.20

Here's one who bartered his native land for gold, he saddled her with a tyrant, set up laws for a bribe, for a bribe he struck them down. This one forced himself on his daughter's bed and sealed a forbidden marriage. All dared an outrageous crime and what they dared, they did.

In his commentary, Servius says the following about the third line of this quotation:

HIC THALAMVM INVASIT NATAE: Thyestes, unde Aegisthus natus est, item Cinyras: nam quod Donatus dicit nefas est credi, dictum esse de Tullio.21

"This one invaded his daughter's room": This concerns Thyestes, as a result of which Aegisthus was born, the same goes for Cinyras. For it is abominable to believe what Donatus says, that this was in reference to Tullius [Cicero].

The Servian commentaries are notoriously full of little curiosities such as this one. The critical judgement that seems to lie behind many is, by almost universal acclamation, rarely worthy of much credence.²² There are, however, a few reasons to believe that this Ciceronian trinket might contain a kernel of truth.

On the 2000th anniversary of Virgil's birth, Frank Olivier delivered a paper on the subject of 'Virgile et Cicéron'. He began by discussing the idea that the character of Drances stood in for Cicero ("mais Cicéron en caricature"²³), but the meat of the argument was this Servian note. Olivier suggested that a negative view of Cicero must have prevailed under the Augustan Principate as a result of Cicero's support of the tyrannicides. Olivier blames Pollio for the exact form of Virgil's attack on Cicero, concluding: "c'est que Virgile détestait Cicéron".24

²⁰ Verg. Aen. 6.621-624.

²¹ Serv. Aen. 6.623. Translation my own.

²² For an overview of the reliability of the Servian commentaries, see Goold 1970.

²³ Olivier 1963, 204-205.

²⁴ Olivier 1963, 209, 211. For responses, see McDermott 1980, 37–38.

Highet gives a typical reaction to the paper's endorsement of Servius' response to Donatus' identification of Cicero with the man being punished in the Underworld for his incestuous relationship with his daughter: "It is not easy to accept this repulsive suggestion".²⁵ There are, however, several features of the Servian text that demand it be taken seriously. The authority of Donatus is the first reason why we might lend credence to this note. Servius' commentary preserves, in idiosyncratic fashion, Virgilian criticism by other scholars, and while Servius may have lacked the necessary judgement to privilege good scholarship over bad, traces of quality remain, and by and large these traces lead back to Donatus.²⁶ Since the most reliable scholar is said to be behind the idea that Virgil was referring to Cicero in this passage, we should be wary of dismissing it out of hand as just another example of the wild fancy one so often finds in this commentary.

The widely-accepted identity of the other figure keeping 'Cicero' company in this scene also supports Donatus' identification: "He [who] sold his country for gold, [and] set upon it a powerful tyrant".27 Cicero's second Philippic against Mark Antony, which we know to have been very popular in Virgil's day, does not stint on the allegation that Mark Antony's role as the Helen of the Roman civil war came about as a result of his "purchased tribunate".28 We can add this to the echo of the same speech that we find in fixit leges.²⁹

It is also impossible to miss the similarity of this line to one written by Varius specifically about Antony:

Vendidit hic Latium populis agrosque Quiritum eripuit; fixit leges pretio atque refixit.30

This man sold Latin rights to the nations and estates belonging to Roman citizens he seized; he made and unmade laws for profit.

Since one of these two anonymous figures matches a character from recent Roman history, it stands to reason that the other should as well.³¹ We are, though, left with the mystery of Virgil's decision to make incest Cicero's defining

²⁵ Highet 1972, 143.

²⁶ Goold 1970, 116, 135. Cf. Thomas 1880, 182.

²⁷ Verg. Aen. 6.621-622.

²⁸ Antony as Helen: Cic. Phil. 2.55; Antony's tribunate and veto being purchased: Cic. Phil. 2.50, 52; for the popularity of the second *Philippic*, see Keeline 2018, 80; La Bua 2019, 47–50.

²⁹ Cic. Phil. 2.98; Macr. Sat. 6.1.39.

³⁰ Varius, De morte (FRP 147), translation Hollis.

³¹ Cf. Berry 1992.

crime. This puzzling aspect seems most of all responsible for Donatus' identification receiving so little in the way of credence.

Although Cicero's family life is characterized for us by his close relationship with his daughter Tullia, scholars tend not to give too much time to the idea that this was anything more than paternal affection.³² Such even-handedness, however, does not seem to have characterized the interpretations of Cicero's contemporaries. Both invectives against Cicero that have come down to us make reference to this charge of incest.

The speech Cassius Dio put in the mouth of Mark Antony's partisan Fufius Calenus runs as follows:

Καὶ προσέτι καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ διαβάλλειν ἐπεχείρησε, τοσαύτη ἀσελγεία καὶ ἀκαθαρσία παρὰ πάντα τὸν βίον χρώμενος ὤστε μηδὲ τῶν συγγενεστάτων ἀπέχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ τήν τε γυναῖκα προαγωγεύειν καὶ τὴν θυγατέρα μοιχεύειν.³³

Furthermore, he undertook to make derogatory remarks about Antony's mouth—this man who has shown so great licentiousness and impurity throughout his entire life that he would not spare even his closest kin, but let out his wife for hire and was his daughter's lover.³⁴

Our other example of anti-Ciceronian rhetoric, the pseudo-Sallustian *Inuectiua in Ciceronem*, displays the same charge:

Verum, ut opinor, splendor domesticus tibi animos tollit, uxor sacrilega ac periuriis delibuta, filia matris paelex, tibi iucundior atque obsequentior quam parenti par est.³⁵

But I imagine the distinction of your domestic scenario makes you proud! A wife smeared with sacrilege and perjuries, a daughter, her mother's rival, more pleasing and submissive to you than a daughter should be to a parent.³⁶

The recurrence of this motif in the two attacks on Cicero is often dismissed as nothing more than part of the rough and tumble of Roman political invective. However, even if we accept the idea that these rumours were completely groundless, this does not mean that the charge of incest with his daughter was not spe-

³² Treggiari 2007, 159.

³³ Dio Cass. 46.18.5 – 6. For the contemporary source for Calenus' speech in Dio, see Millar 1961, 21 n. 91.

³⁴ Translation Cary 1916.

³⁵ [Sall.] *Inu. in Cic.* 2. For the early imperial credentials of this text, see Goodyear 1982, 269; Novokhatko 2009, 111–114.

³⁶ Translation Shackleton Bailey 2002.

cifically designed to fit Cicero.³⁷ Although little of the anti-Ciceronian tradition survives from the early imperial period, Donatus' conjecture and these quotations from the invectives suggest that one did exist, and that it was a wellknown aspect of the popular perception of his last year.³⁸

One final aspect of Virgil's treatment of Cicero and Antony which deserves explication is his decision to render Cicero and Antony anonymous, identifiable only by their charge sheet. One might immediately note that the anonymity of this pair foreshadows the anonymous introduction accorded to that other pair of rivals who dragged Rome into the previous Civil War.³⁹ The anonymized pairing also draws attention to the mutually-assured destruction that characterized Antony and Cicero's role in bringing the fall of the Republic.

It seems ultimately fitting, in light of the viciousness of their quarrel, and how utterly their war of words dominates the evidence for the years 44-43, that Mark Antony and Cicero should find themselves occupying the same patch of soil in Virgil's underworld, identifiable only by the polemics that they had hurled at each other. As Livy insightfully noted in his obituary for Cicero, he suffered nothing worse at the hands of Antony than he would have inflicted had fortune granted him the victory.⁴⁰

Fighting Talk

So far, then, I have argued for a deeper appreciation of the ways in which Virgil incorporated the years 44-43 BCE into his Aeneid, and for a better understanding of what this can tell us about how Cicero's role in those events was processed in its aftermath. I have argued that Virgil was no conscientious objector when it came to exploiting the powerful imagery of Cicero's mutilated body, and I have suggested that Cicero's final duel with Mark Antony was understood as one characterized chiefly by vicious rancour on both sides. To conclude this argument, I

³⁷ Just as allegations of incest were specifically tailored to Clodius and his sisters: Günther 2000.

³⁸ For the existence of an anti-Ciceronian tradition in historiography and in the declamation halls, see Sillett 2015, 78-91; 272-287; 321-336; 344-352.

³⁹ Pompey and Caesar: Verg. Aen. 6.826-835. For a reading of this episode in the context of Augustan propaganda, see Farron 1980.

⁴⁰ Sen. Suas. 6.22: Omnium aduersorum nihil ut uiro dignum erat tulit [sc. Cicero] praeter mortem, quae uere aestimanti minus indigna uideri potuit, quod a uictore inimico <nihil> crudelius passus erat quam quod eiusdem fortunae conpos ipse fecisset.

shall now consider the character most often associated with Cicero at his most bellicose—the Latin orator Drances.

The identification of Cicero with Drances is neither a new one nor one lacking in contention: the length of the bibliography on the subject is itself a fine index of its controversy. 41 As a result of this, it is worth taking time to lay out the textual evidence that lies behind this scholarship.

Aeneid 11 opens with the Trojans and the Latins achieving a truce in order to bury their dead. 42 In the course of this armistice, Latinus calls a council, during which the envoys sent to seek the assistance of Diomedes return. Diomedes' choice not to involve himself in the war leads Drances to speak. Although in this instance Drances is a man speaking eloquently in the right cause, the sordidness of his motives is immediately revealed:43

Tum senior semperque odiis et crimine Drances infensus iuueni Turno sic ore uicissim orsa refert.44

Then aged Drances-always quick to attack the young captain, Turnus-full of hatred and accusations, breaks forth to have his say.

After this introduction, Drances delivers a speech attempting to hammer out the terms for a peace between Aeneas and Latinus that explicitly excludes Turnus. He is next encountered using the peace guaranteed by his truce to stir up Latin feeling against Turnus, accusing him of being the only obstacle to a lasting settlement. This proves unsuccessful.45

These moments, however, are just a warm-up to Drances' main scene. His character has already been fixed as a powerful speaker committed to the destruction of Turnus, yet Virgil still reiterates this when Drances reappears in the council of war:

Tum Drances idem infensus, quem gloria Turni obliqua inuidia stimulisque agitabat amaris.46

⁴¹ For this bibliography, see McDermott 1980.

⁴² Verg. Aen. 11.100 - 224.

⁴³ For Drances speaking in the right cause, see Verg. Aen. 11.132; for Drances speaking well, see 124 - 126.

⁴⁴ Verg. Aen. 11.122 – 124.

⁴⁵ Verg. Aen. 11.220 - 224.

⁴⁶ Verg. Aen. 11.336 - 337.

Drances rises, aggressive as always, stung by Turnus' glory, spurred by smarting, barely hidden envy.

Drances goes on to deliver one of the *Aeneid*'s few formal speeches, supporting Latinus' call for an end to the conflict with the Trojans. He supplements it, however, with a call to achieve this at Turnus' expense.⁴⁷

The very bellicosity of this rhetoric has given rise to the suspicion that Cicero was a model for Drances. The key passage for this idea is the character-sketch Virgil provides before his speech:

Largus opum et lingua melior, sed frigida bello dextera, consiliis habitus non futtilis auctor, seditione potens (genus huic materna superbum nobilitas dabat, incertum de patre ferebat), surgit et his onerat dictis atque aggerat iras.⁴⁸

A lavish spender, his rhetoric even looser, but a frozen hand in battle. No small voice in the public councils, always a shrewd adviser, a power in party strife. On his mother's side, well born, but his father's side remains a blank.

Olivier, Highet, Kennedy and Gransden all argue that this description of Drances' origins recalls Cicero's *nouus homo* status.⁴⁹ They do so with reason—this passage is very similar to the material found in the first lines of Plutarch's biography of Cicero:

Κικέρωνος δὲ τὴν μὲν μητέρα λέγουσιν Ἑλβίαν καὶ γεγονέναι καλῶς καὶ βεβιωκέναι, περὶ δὲ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐδὲν ἦν πυθέσθαι μέτριον. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐν κναφείῳ τινὶ καὶ γενέσθαι καὶ τραφῆναι τὸν ἄνδρα λέγουσιν, οἱ δ' εἰς Τύλλον Ἄττιον ἀνάγουσι τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ γένους, βασιλεύσαντα λαμπρῶς ἐν Οὐολούσκοις καὶ πολεμήσαντα Ῥωμαίοις οὐκ ἀδυνάτως. 50

Cicero's mother Helvia, so they say, was of honourable birth and lived an honourable life, but there was no unbiased story to be discovered about his father. For some say the man was born and bred in a clothes-cleaner's shop, while others trace the origin of his family to Tullus Attius, who had a brilliant reign among the Volsci and fought the Romans to some effect.

⁴⁷ Verg. Aen. 11.343 – 375; cf. Gransden 1991 ad loc. and Highet 1972, 278.

⁴⁸ Verg. Aen. 11.338 - 342.

⁴⁹ Olivier 1963, 204-205; Highet 1972, 142-144; Kennedy 1972, 395; Gransden 1991, 14.

⁵⁰ Plut. *Cic.* 1.1–2. Translations from Plutarch: Lintott 2013.

Moles and Lintott's commentaries on this passage acknowledge that ignoble birth was a common enough insult in this period, but recognize that these charges appear elsewhere in connection with Cicero.⁵¹ The link with fullery appears in Calenus' invective in Dio's history.⁵² Moreover, Lintott connects the charge to Cicero's own day via contemporary texts, while Moles does so via epigraphy.⁵³ Going beyond Plutarch, there is independent testimony indicating that while Cicero's paternal family had no great standing in Rome, his mother's *gens* can be linked to several important magistracies around 200 BCE and at the end of the Republic.⁵⁴ Although these origins would no doubt fit the bill for many figures, not many of them also share Drances and Cicero's status as famed orators.

The other part of Virgil's text that is usually connected with Cicero is taken from Turnus' speech in reply to Drances' invective:

Imus in aduersos—quid cessas? an tibi Mauors uentosa in lingua pedibusque fugacibus istis semper erit?⁵⁵

Come, shall we march against them? You hang back—why? Will your warlust always lie in your windy words and your craven, racing feet?

The phrasing of this attack is unmistakably reminiscent of the pseudo-Sallustian *Inuectiua in Ciceronem:*

Immo uero homo leuissimus, supplex inimicis, amicis contumeliosus, modo harum, modo illarum partium, fidus nemini, leuissimus senator, mercenarius patronus, cuius nulla pars corporis a turpitudine uacat, lingua uana, manus rapacissimae, gula immensa, pedes fugaces. ⁵⁶

On the contrary, he is the most irresponsible of mankind, suppliant to his enemies, insolent to his friends, in one party one day, in another the next, loyal to none, an irresponsible Senator, a mercenary patron, with no part of his body clear of turpitude: false tongue, grasping hands, immense gullet, runaway feet, most indecent the parts that cannot decently be named.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Moles 1988 ad loc.; Lintott 2013 ad loc.

⁵² Dio Cass. 46.4.2-5.1.

⁵³ Cic. Att. 12.32.3, 15.17.1, 15.20.4, 16.1.5; CIL 10.5678.

⁵⁴ MRR 2.572.

⁵⁵ Verg. Aen. 11.389 – 391.

^{56 [}Sall.] Inu. in Cic. 3.5.

⁵⁷ Translation Shackleton Bailey 2002.

Both Gransden and McDermott are keen to identify the link between these two passages.⁵⁸ In terms of both specific vocabulary and general theme, there is a remarkable similarity here. The invective is consonant with the idea that Drances' bark is worse than his bite, and it also supplies a basic outline of Cicero's life and career that neatly matches Drances' (largely avoiding a career in the military, instead making his name as an orator).⁵⁹ Even Cicero did not shy away from such an interpretation of his life:

Cedant arma togae, concedat laurea laudi.60

Let arms yield to the toga, and let the triumphal laurel give way to panegyric.

Virgil's portrait of Drances, then, is the negative exposure of Cicero's laudatory assessment of the orator-statesman.

The overtly Ciceronian resonances in Virgil's depiction of Drances are not an aspect of this part of the poem that sit in isolation. Virgil's decision to use the specialist vocabulary of contemporary Roman politics makes it even more tempting to situate the stand-off between Drances and Turnus in the world of the late Roman Republic. This section contains a remarkable concentration of such political language, words like: *libertas*, *penates*, *auspicium*, *ciues*, *imperium*, *oratores*, *patres* (viz. senators) and *legati*. Most extraordinary, however, is the opening phrase Turnus hurls against Drances:

Larga quidem semper, Drance, tibi copia fandi tum cum bella manus poscunt, patribusque uocatis primus ades. Sed non replenda est curia uerbis, quae tuto tibi magna uolant, dum distinet hostem agger murorum nec inundant sanguine fossae.⁶²

Always a mighty flood of words from you, Drances, when battle demands our fighting hands! Whenever the senate's called, you're first to show your face. But there is no earthly need to fill these halls with the talk that flies so bravely from your mouth, safe as you are while the ramparts keep the enemy out and the trenches still don't overflow with blood.

⁵⁸ McDermott 1980, 36; Gransden 1991, 15.

⁵⁹ For Drances being readier with words than a sword, see Verg. Aen. 11.338 – 339.

⁶⁰ This line from *De consulatu suo* is quoted at Cic. *Off*. 1.77 and expanded upon as an admirable way of life for a statesman.

⁶¹ Verg. Aen. 11.346; 264; 33, 347; 119, 243, 305, 360, 459; 58, 193; 100, 331; 379; 227, 239, 296.

⁶² Verg. Aen. 11.378 - 382.

The references to the senatorial patres and to Drances' copia fandi both push us towards reading Turnus' speech as a reply to a specifically Ciceronian piece of oratory.⁶³ But it is the reference to the *Curia*, the building in which the Roman senate convened, that immediately transports Drances and Turnus' conflict away from Latinus' primitive kingdom and into the world of contemporary Roman politics.

Not, however, precisely contemporary politics. Suetonius' summary of the senate in the reign of Augustus shows how very different it was from the one Virgil depicts in Latium.⁶⁴ With the increased formalization of the prominent role played by Augustus' Consilium, the imperial Curia became one in which extended debate was kept to a minimum: meetings were few, members were handpicked by the emperor himself, attendance was kept low and matters of controversy were dealt with in advance. A scene in the Curia as described here by Virgil was still redolent of the Roman senate, but only of the one which sat in the years preceding the Civil War—the Curia in which Cicero's Philippics were heard and debated.⁶⁵ The use of the senate as a forum for grandstanding political speeches on matters pertaining to the safety of the patria arguably reached its zenith at this moment. The hints of Cicero in the rhetoric and character of the orator/ statesman Drances, then, are made all the more explicit by the Republican backdrop Virgil created for them.

The popularity of the *Philippics* in this period demonstrates how attached Virgil's audience was to the idea of viewing Augustus' eventual rise to power as the endpoint of a conflict between the swords of Mark Antony and the words of Cicero.⁶⁶ The years 44-43 BCE, and specifically Cicero's role in them, could not be separated from the teleology of Augustus' Principate.

Philippics and Freedom

One aspect of the debate between Drances and Turnus in particular points the reader towards seeing it as an allegorical representation of the *Philippics*. This is the use of the word *libertas* (cf. Paulson and Jansen in this volume). This word appears only three times in the *Aeneid*, at each point signifying an impor-

⁶³ For Cicero's copia, see Cic. Brut. 253.

⁶⁴ Suet. Aug. 35. For the imperial senate, see Brunt 1984 and Talbert 1984.

⁶⁵ For this peculiar position accorded to the *Philippics*, see Kennedy 1972, 303; Bellardi 1978, 40 - 41; Pina Polo 1989, 137; Pina Polo 1996, 159 n. 37; Manuwald 2007, vol. 1, 141 n. 394.

⁶⁶ For the popularity of the Philippics in this period, see Manuwald 2007, vol. 1, 140 – 143; Keeline 2018, 80: La Bua 2019, 47-50.

tant moment in Roman history. Its first two appearances deal with the expulsion of the kings and the foundation of the Republic. In the underworld, Anchises uses the concept of libertas to explain Brutus' decision to execute his own sons for their participation in an attempt to restore monarchy at Rome (pulchra pro libertate).⁶⁷ Later, on the shield of Aeneas, the cause of libertas is raised again to explain what Aeneas' descendants were fighting for when they beat back the forces of Tarquinius Superbus' ally, Lars Porsenna.⁶⁸

It is a matter of great significance that the debate between Turnus and Drances is the only part of the Aeneid where the word libertas is used outside of a historical context. This powerful word is raised at the very beginning of Drances' speech, as he responds to Latinus' suggestion that a peace treaty be made with the Trojans:

Rem nulli obscuram nostrae nec uocis egentem consulis, o bone rex: cuncti se scire fatentur quid fortuna ferat populi, sed dicere mussant. Det libertatem fandi flatusque remittat, cuius ob auspicium infaustum moresque sinistros (dicam equidem, licet arma mihi mortemque minetur) lumina tot cecidisse ducum totamque uidemus consedisse urbem luctu, dum Troia temptat castra fugae fidens et caelum territat armis.⁶⁹

Our situation is clear for all to see, and it needs no voice of ours in council now, my noble king. The people know, they admit they know what destiny has in store, but they flinch from speaking out. Let him allow us to speak and guit his puffed-up pride, that man whose unholy leadership and twisted ways— Oh, I'll let loose, he can threaten me with death! so many leading lights among us he's snuffed out that we see our entire city plunged in grief while he, trusting that he can break and run, attacks the Trojans, terrorizing the heavens with his spears!

As we have seen from the first two appearances of *libertas* in the *Aeneid*, Virgil has no interest in presenting anything other than a complicated case for this concept. Libertas in the early Republic is shown as capable of provoking both extraordinary martial bravery and hard-hearted filicide. Here it is similarly dubious,

⁶⁷ Verg. Aen. 6.819 – 823.

⁶⁸ Verg. Aen. 8.646 - 648.

⁶⁹ Verg. Aen. 11.343 – 351.

appearing in the mouth of a deeply compromised character, and furthermore presented in the narrowed terms of libertas fandi. 70 This form of libertas was a troubling virtue, and it was well-known that it had the power to corrupt other forms of *libertas*. ⁷¹ Its potential for corruption was far from an academic concern for Virgil's readers: it played its part in the res publica's descent into civil war and the rise of the Principate under which they lived.⁷²

Virgil's decision to flag up the peculiarly Republican concept of *libertas* in a scene so redolent of the characters and events that dominated the last years of the Republic forces the reader to consider what bearing this council and the character of Drances might have on the concept. When viewed through this lens, it becomes increasingly difficult to ignore the presence of Cicero. More specifically, it becomes difficult not to read Drances' speech as an echo of the rhetoric found in the *Philippics*.

These speeches, also delivered by a man of words against a man of arms, place an overwhelming emphasis on libertas. Of the 14 Philippics that have come down to us, all but one (the ninth) refer to this concept, and altogether the word is used 102 times. Manuwald's commentary has the following to say:

This single term refers to essential values of the Republican order, which have to be defended against the threat posed by Antonius; they are specific to the Roman people and constitute the ideal for which Cicero fights against Antonius. Freedom is presented as a precondition for true peace, while other kinds of (apparent) peace are described as equivalent to slavery.73

Drances' call for *libertas fandi* may seem at first slightly narrower than this, but it is not so different. His demand for the freedom to speak out against Turnus is a statement that the Latins should not be placed into an unquestioning servitude of a warrior prince.

As we have seen from Cicero's presentation in the underworld, however, Virgil is not one to allow this character so principled a stand. It is immediately undercut by Virgil's implication that Drances' motive is not that of preserving the state, but rather that of undermining his rival.⁷⁴ In a similar manner, it does not require an overly cynical attitude to note that Cicero's assumption of a high-spirited defence of the libertas populi Romani in 44-43 BCE entailed a

⁷⁰ For libertas and free speech, see Brunt 1988, 281-350.

⁷¹ For the ability of *libertas fandi* to overturn other forms of *libertas*, see Kapust 2011, 4-21.

⁷² La Penna 1979.

⁷³ Manuwald 2007, vol. 2, 306.

⁷⁴ For Virgil undercutting Drances' stand against Turnus by reference to his character and motives, see Burke 1978.

great increase in his own personal power and gloria. It also allowed him to defend the narrow interests he had long stood for and provided him with a platform for his oratory and that he could use to put down his opponents. As the early imperial writers of critical obituaries for Cicero attest, there were plenty of authorities who argued that this last fight against Antony was motivated more by personal enmity than principle.⁷⁵

Hidden polemic

Although I have so far treated these incidents in isolation, their cumulative effect must also be considered, the better to understand this early document of the reception of Cicero's final fight. The most striking aspect of Virgil's presentation from a modern perspective is the even-handed approach the poet takes to Cicero and Antony. In spite of the largely positive early stages of Cicero's reception in the imperial period and Mark Antony's universal demonization (strong hints of which we find in Deiphobus' mutilated visage), Virgil takes every opportunity thereafter to equivocate between the two-placing them in each other's company in the underworld of Aeneid 6 and insisting on the villainy of his most prominent orator.

Virgil's ability to suggest that Cicero and Mark Antony were, on a political level at least, only as bad as each other suggests that a far greater degree of anti-Ciceronian polemic was in circulation than is often suggested.⁷⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus provides some unexpected corroboration for the idea that immediately after Cicero's death the invectives from his final years were incorporated into his biography. Here is Ammianus' digression on the province of Egypt:

Vnde Aristarchus grammaticae rei doctrinis excellens, et Herodianus artium minutissimus sciscitator, et Saccas Ammonius Plotini magister, aliique plurimi scriptores multorum in litteris nobilium studiorum, inter quos Chalcenterus eminuit Didymus, multiplicis scientiae copia memorabilis, qui in illis sex libris ubi non numquam inperfecte Tullium reprehendit sillographos imitatus scriptores maledicos, iudicio doctarum aurium incusatur, ut inmania frementem leonem putredulis uocibus canis catulus longius circumlatrans.⁷⁷

From there came Aristarchus, eminent in thorny problems of grammatical lore, and Herodian, a most accurate investigator in science and Saccas Ammonius, the teacher of Plotinus, and numerous other writers in many famous branches of literature. Among these Di-

⁷⁵ See Sillett 2015, 155 – 159; 178 – 180.

⁷⁶ For Augustus' willingness to embrace the memory of Cicero to blacken Antony's reputation, see Keeline in this volume (pp. 32-33).

⁷⁷ Amm. Marc. 22.16.16.

dymus Chalcenterus was conspicuous for the abundance of his diversified knowledge, although in those six books in which he sometimes unsuccessfully criticises Cicero, imitating the scurrilous writers of Silli, he makes the same impression on learned ears as a puppydog barking from a distance with quavering voice around a lion roaring awfully.⁷⁸

The *Suda* can be used to fill in this picture. It tells us that Didymus was a Greek scholar who lived, studied and wrote in Egypt while Mark Antony held sway in the east.⁷⁹ Furthermore, it tells us that his attack focused on Cicero's *De re publica*.⁸⁰ The existence of a six volume treatise lacerating Cicero's venture into the field of political theory is an invaluable glimpse of what must have been a far larger world of anti-Ciceronian literature than we might imagine when surveying the literary scene of the Augustan era.

Didymus' Egyptian background and the fact that the *Suda* specifically dates his life with reference to Mark Antony suggest that his anti-Ciceronian writings should be connected with the propaganda war that followed in the wake of the power struggle that erupted between Octavian and Mark Antony in the aftermath of the Battle of Philippi.⁸¹ The posthumous popularity of Cicero's *Philippics* cannot be divorced from this context. The fame these speeches achieved ensured that the damage they did to Mark Antony's reputation was not limited to the moment of their delivery or initial publication. We should not be surprised if writers like Didymus saw an opportunity to gain Mark Antony's patronage by composing attacks against Cicero's intellectual credentials in order to undermine some of the cultural prestige that the *Philippics* had garnered.⁸²

According to Ammianus' note, Didymus Chalcenterus, scholar though he may have been, did not trouble himself too much with preventing Sillographic scurrility from entering into his attacks on the *De re publica*.⁸³ Whatever form this strange work took, it seems to have combined the academic with the person-

⁷⁸ Translation Rolfe 1940.

⁷⁹ Suda ad Didymus.

⁸⁰ For the interaction between Didymus, Demosthenes and Cicero, see Bishop 2015, for this work in particular, 291.

⁸¹ See, for example: Suet. *Aug.* 2, 7, 10, 16, 63, 68, 69, 70, 86. For modern treatments of this propaganda war, see Scott 1929; Charlesworth 1933; Geiger 1980; Gosling 1985; Biffi 1994; Hekster 2004.

⁸² For Didymus' genre, see Dickey 2007, 11–14. For an overview of Didymus' works, see Gibson 2002, 51–69. For the overwhelmingly historical and contextual, rather than stylistic, nature of Didymus' critical approach, see Bishop 2015, 284–294.

⁸³ Murky though our picture of the Sillographoi may be, the overwhelming picture we receive of the major practitioners (Xenophanes of Colophon and Timon of Phlius) is one of parodic mockery of the personal character of select philosophers, and of their philosophies. For Timon and the Sillographoi, see Clayman 2010, 117–144.

al. Given the immense powers of patronage that Mark Antony enjoyed in these years, it would be very surprising indeed if Didymus had been the only writer to have turned his pen on Cicero in order to win the Triumvir's gratitude.

By the time the battle of Actium and Antony's suicide had concluded Rome's latest civil war, the reputation of Marcus Tullius Cicero could have borne little resemblance to its standing today. The volume of anti-Ciceronian invective created by Mark Antony's supporters cannot be known, but it would be naïve to suppose that the influence of this tradition would have been anything other than considerable and forceful.

Conclusion

As the title of this chapter hints, I would like to seek a broader context for these moments in that most paradigmatic of places, the poem's opening simile.84 In his description of Neptune's calming of the storm sent by Juno to sink the Trojan fleet, Virgil compares his arrival to a magistrate appearing before a rioting mob:

Ac ueluti magno in populo cum saepe coorta est seditio, saeuitque animis ignobile uolgus, iamque faces et saxa uolant—furor arma ministrat; tum, pietate grauem ac meritis si forte uirum quem conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus adstant; ille regit dictis animos, et pectora mulcet.85

Just as, all too often, some huge crowd is seized by a vast uprising, the rabble runs amok, all slaves to passion, rocks, firebrands flying. Rage finds them arms but then, if they chance to see a man among them, one whose devotion and public service lend him weight, they stand there, stock-still with their ears alert as he rules their furor with his words and calms their passion.

Whatever the specific historical resonances of this scene may be, it goes without saying that it is one highly consonant with Cicero's ideal of the orator statesman, and their elevated position above a respectful and deferential populace.

⁸⁴ For the paradigmatic force of opening similes, see Feeney 2014; Beck forthcoming. For the first simile of the Aeneid more generally, see Beck 2014; Feeney 2014, 208-221.

⁸⁵ Verg. Aen. 1.148 – 153.

One of the most striking aspects of this simile, however, is how thoroughly it fails to be realized in the course of the poem. Nowhere is this failure clearer than in the striking breakdown of communication in Latium during Drances' confrontation with Turnus: neither orator attempts, still less succeeds, in using their words to cool ardours or soothe passions. Virgil's decision to lace this crucial episode with references to Cicero's final fight against Mark Antony is vital for understanding its power to explain both the poem's reflection on the power of words in a world wracked by civil turmoil, and Virgil's contemporaries' understanding of Cicero's personal role in Rome's collapse into civil war in 43 BCE.⁸⁶

Philip Hardie's article on the Council of the Latins can be used to draw these threads together:

Drances is no simple allegory of Cicero or Catiline, but we will probably not err in hearing in the debate in the Council of Latins echoes of the contests of oratory of the late Republic, which issued in no solution to the political problems of the time. This endless squabbling *dubiis de rebus* could be resolved only by the intervention of the man who claimed to be the descendant of Aeneas.⁸⁷

Of course Drances is no *simple* allegory of Cicero. It is difficult, however, to shake the impression that Cicero is crucial to understanding what this character represents.

The effect of the Ciceronian element in Drances is partly summed up in Hardie's argument that the oratorical contests of the late Republic "issued in no solution to the political problems of the time". This notion comes to the fore in Virgil's decision to repeatedly expose Drances' base motives before allowing him to make his speciously principled speech. In doing so, the poet undermines the rhetoric of *libertas* that Drances employs against Turnus—rhetoric that had been employed by his real-life counterpart in the *Philippics*.

These two statesmen are united by their oratorical efforts. But regardless of considerations either of motive or of the underlying good sense of what they are arguing, they simply end up perpetuating conflict. Drances is right that the best course for the Latins is to lay down their arms and make peace with the Trojans, and an Augustan audience should have felt that Cicero was probably onto something in his argument that the world would be better off without Mark Antony. It is clear, however, that neither of these facts could be accomplished by speech alone. Peace will only be made between the Trojans and the Latins after Turnus

⁸⁶ For the dependence of the *Philippics*' posthumous fame upon Cicero's proleptic ownership of his 'failure' in this final fight, see Bishop in this volume.

⁸⁷ Hardie 1998, 262.

has been slaughtered by Aeneas. Similarly, Mark Antony's alleged tyrannical designs will only be checked by Octavian's swords and ships. It is bloodshed and a divine hero that resolves these crises, not words, however well or ill-intentioned.88

In both the worlds of Rome's foundation and of the fall of the Republic, however, the orators' words are of crucial importance when it comes to fomenting the armed conflict. Even if the ultimate defeats of Mark Antony and Turnus should be read as positive events within Virgil's epic, it remains difficult indeed to celebrate the contributions of the orators who drove forward the conflicts that brought about their mutual destruction.

It is not simply the case that the parallels between Cicero and the vile Drances serve to damn Arpinum's favourite son by association, the study essayed above of Cicero's ghostly appearances in the underworld show that Drances' character is as much compromised by association with Cicero as vice versa. The Cicero we find in the Aeneid is one whose reputation has been deeply scarred by the bellicosity of his final fight against Mark Antony. 89 However principled and brave some may have considered this fight, Virgil provides an eloquent testimony to just how blemished this final year left Cicero's reputation.

⁸⁸ Hardie 1998; Feeney 2014, 221.

⁸⁹ Although Cicero's appearance alongside Antony in the underworld is left anonymous, the effect (as laid out above) is one of heightening the association between them and their destructive invective, not one of sparing embarrassment.